

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1.42. (cancelled)

43. (new) A system for controlling a telecommunications network, the system comprising:

 a first switch fabric, situated within the telecommunications network, for controlling connections in the telecommunications network, the first switch fabric including (i) a first port containing a first voice data section and a first control section, (ii) a second port containing a second voice data section and a second control section, (iii) a third port containing a third voice data section and a third control section, wherein the third voice data section is communicatively coupled to a first peripheral apparatus, (iv) a fourth port containing a fourth voice data section and a fourth control section, wherein the fourth voice data section and the is communicatively coupled to a second peripheral apparatus, and (v) a bridging circuit connecting the first voice data section and the second voice data section; and

 a computer apparatus arranged to (i) command the first control section to establish a first connection between the first voice data section and the third voice data section allowing the bridging circuit and the first peripheral apparatus to communicate, (ii) command the second control section to establish a second connection between the second voice data section and the fourth voice data section, allowing the bridging circuit and the second peripheral apparatus to communicate, thereby allowing the first peripheral apparatus to communicate with the second peripheral apparatus via the first connection, the bridging circuit and the second connection.

44. (new) The system recited in claim 43, wherein the first voice data section and the second voice data section support multiple bridging circuits and the system comprises a plurality of bridging circuits with at least two of the bridging circuits being combined in a common trunk.

45. (new) The system recited in claim 43 wherein the computer apparatus is further arranged to (i) send a first command to the first control section, via a first control link, for controlling the first connection, and (ii) send a second control command to the second control section, via a second control link, for controlling the second connection.

46. (new) The system recited in claim 45 wherein the first and second control links are combined in a control network.

47. (new) The system recited in claim 43 wherein the first switch fabric comprises a single telecommunications switch.

48. (new) The system recited in claim 43 wherein the first switch fabric comprises first and second telecommunications switches with the first telecommunications switch having the first and third ports and the second telecommunications switch having the second and fourth ports.

49. (new) The system recited in claim 43 wherein the computer apparatus is also arranged to receive control signals from the first switch fabric.

50. (new) The system recited in claim 49 wherein the computer apparatus is also arranged to pass the control signals from the first and second control sections to the second and first control sections, respectively.

51. (new) The system recited in claim 49 wherein the computer apparatus is arranged to perform a corresponding service upon receipt of one of the control signals from the first switch fabric.

52. (new) The system recited in claim 43 wherein the computer apparatus comprises a server.

53. (new) The system recited in claim 52 wherein the computer apparatus further comprises a signaling gateway arranged to communicate with the server, and wherein the signaling gateway comprises first and second communication ports for communicating with the first and second control sections, respectively, of the first switch fabric.

54. (new) The system recited in claim 52 wherein the server communicates, through a computer network, with a user terminal.

55. (new) The system recited in claim 43 wherein computer apparatus commands the first switch fabric using commands related to establishing or breaking a telecommunications connection.

56. (new) The system recited in claim 43 wherein the computer apparatus is arranged to generate a call detail record upon establishing a connection from one of the first voice data section and the second voice data section to the third port.

57. (new) The system recited in claim 43, wherein the computer apparatus control of the bridging circuit is based on at least one of a time of day, a day of a week, and a calling party.

58. (new) The system recited in claim 43, wherein the computer apparatus receives a signal from a device associated with the first connection, and responsively commands the first switching fabric disconnect the first connection from the second connection and to bridge the first connection with a third connection, wherein the third connection is also supported by the first switching fabric.

59. (new) A method for use in a system for controlling a telecommunications network, wherein the system comprises a first switch fabric, situated within the telecommunications network, for controlling connections in the telecommunications network, the first switch fabric having a first port containing a first voice data section and a first control section, a second port containing a second voice data section and a second control section, a third port containing a third voice data section and a third control section, and a fourth port containing a fourth voice data section and a fourth control section, wherein the third voice data section is communicatively coupled to a first peripheral apparatus, wherein the fourth voice data section is communicatively coupled to a second peripheral apparatus, and wherein a bridging circuit connects the first and second voice data sections, and wherein the system also comprises a

computer apparatus arranged to communicate with the first and second control sections, the method comprising:

the computer apparatus commanding the first control section to establish a first connection between the first voice data section and the third voice data section allowing the bridging circuit and the first peripheral apparatus to communicate; and

the computer apparatus commanding the second control section to establish a second connection between the second voice data section and the fourth voice data section allowing the bridging circuit and the second peripheral apparatus to communicate, thereby allowing the first peripheral apparatus to communicate with the second peripheral apparatus via the first connection, the bridging circuit and the second connection.

60. (new) The method recited in claim 59 wherein commanding the first control section to establish the first connection comprises sending a first control command to the first control section, and wherein commanding the second control section to establish the second connection comprises sending a second control command to the second control section.

61. (new) The method recited in claim 59, wherein the computer apparatus comprises a server communicating with the first switch fabric and the server communicating, via a computer network, with a user terminal, the method further comprising:

the server sending a control command to the first switch fabric upon receipt of a user command from the user terminal.

62. (new) The method recited in claim 61 further comprising:

the server receiving a control command from the first control section of the first switch fabric; and

the server communicating a response to the user terminal upon receipt of the control command from the first switch fabric.